

about steady growth, tame inflation, climbing wages and falling interest rates. This increasingly stable and healthy economic environment has helped Mexico become, and I quote from the Business Week article, a middle-class nation where millions have access to mortgages, solid jobs provide security, and a class of strivers saves to put its kids through college.

Mr. Speaker, Mexico's middle class has grown to over 10 million families or 40 percent of all the households in Mexico. Business Week also credits home ownership as another key factor in the emergence of a robust middle class. Strong economic fundamentals have slashed mortgage rates in half in just 2 years. The growing ranks of Mexican homeowners buttresses middle-class growth by allowing families to build equity, plan for their financial futures and move further up the economic ladder.

The middle class has also been able to afford additional consumer goods. Last year, auto sales in Mexico were up 33 percent from 2000 as a record 1.3 million cars and trucks were purchased. Home appliance sales have tripled in the past decade. Even extras like concert tickets and sporting events tickets are increasingly accessible to the average working family.

Mr. Speaker, most of us would not consider refrigerators or baseball games to be major luxuries. But for a country that has struggled greatly with poverty and deep economic crises, these are signs of tremendous economic progress. They are proof that our policy of economic engagement through agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement are working to bring new opportunities for the people in Mexico and also for the people right here in the United States.

They are an important step forward in ensuring that the swollen ranks of illegal immigrants are losing their incentive to come here illegally to find opportunity. Mexican officials are demonstrating the fact that they recognize the reality of the problem of illegal immigration as well. On February 16th, the Mexican Congress adopted a resolution that acknowledged the graveness of the illegal immigration issue and outlined the principles of its agenda to combat the problem. This resolution cited economic opportunity as critical to a successful campaign to prevent illegal immigration to the United States and to encourage the return of migrants to their homes in Mexico.

I am encouraged by the Mexican Parliament's bold language in accepting responsibility for action, and putting forth the outline of a plan. I am heartened that economic growth is central to Mexico's long-term strategy, because we know a growing Mexican middle class is a shrinking illegal immigrant class.

With greater hope for the future, there is a greater incentive to stay and build a life at home. Mexico is pledging to remain committed to a pro-growth

agenda. We must remain equally committed to an open trade agenda that helps our southern neighbor to continue down a path of economic growth and greater opportunity.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 45 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PUTNAM) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord our God, around the upper part of this Chamber are profile medallions which recall the personal history of lawmaking. In the center, full-faced and bold before us, is the image of Moses, the great lawgiver of the Hebrew scriptures.

May the people of this Nation and, in particular, those elected to the 109th Congress, who gather here to protect and guide this Nation, be faithful to Your commands.

Your revelation, Lord, gives us nothing less than the lessons we need to address the issues of the day. Your commandments are the foundations on which we build hope. They are the supports which strengthen faith in public action and the food which nourishes the human heart.

By obeying Your laws, those in representative government inspire those they represent, the governed. To internalize Your commands and live according to Your Word is to lead to fulfillment and bring promise to a disillusioned world, when left on its own.

Therefore, in the midst of everything, from You, Lord our God, we choose to draw wisdom and strength, now and forever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. THORNBERRY led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 6, 2006.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on March 6, 2006, at 11:05 am:

That the Senate Passed with an amendment and requests a conference with the House on H.R. 2830.

With best wishes, I am,
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS,
Clerk of the House.

PRIVILEGED REPORT ON RESOLUTION OF INQUIRY TO THE PRESIDENT

Mr. THORNBERRY, from the Committee on Armed Services, submitted an adverse privileged report (Rept. No. 109-384) on the resolution (H. Res. 645) requesting the President and directing the Secretary of Defense to transmit to the House of Representatives all information in the possession of the President or the Secretary of Defense relating to the collection of intelligence information pertaining to persons inside the United States without obtaining court-ordered warrants authorizing the collection of such information and relating to the policy of the United States with respect to the gathering of counterterrorism intelligence within the United States, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PRIVILEGED REPORT ON RESOLUTION OF INQUIRY TO THE PRESIDENT

Mr. THORNBERRY, from the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, submitted an adverse privileged report (Rept. No. 109-385) on the resolution (H. Res. 641) requesting the President to provide to the House of Representatives certain documents in his possession relating to electronic surveillance without search warrants on individuals in the United States, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

THE BARE FACTS ON THE ECONOMY

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)